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ABSTRACT

Wagiman is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken in the northern part of the Northern Territory by about ten people. It possesses an unusual open class of words, which are called coverbs. Most frequently coverbs are paired with an inflecting verb from a closed class to form a complex predicate. This book provides a descriptive and analytical account of the behavior of coverbs in Wagiman, especially their role in complex predicate formation. The book aims to discover what principles are at work in directing and constraining this process, and how the meaning of the whole is derived from the meanings of the parts. After discussing a wide range of data from the language, a formal lexical functional grammar is outlined. It is argued that to account for the intricacy of Wagiman complex predicates, it is necessary for the grammar to make explicit reference to representations of lexical meaning, and that complex predicate formation can be seen as the fusion of these semantic representations. Chapter titles include the following: "Some Essential Features of Wagiman Morpho-Syntax"; "Coverbs as a Word Class"; "Coverb Constructions"; "The Semantics and Arguments of Complex Predicates"; "A Formal Approach to Complex Predicates." Two appendices are included: "Abbreviations and Conventions" and "Orthography and Phonology." (KFT)

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